FREE
WITH ISSUE 36 OF NMS

KILLER INSTINCT

EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW



They said it couldn't be done; even on NU 64. But Killer Instinct has made it to the Super NES in damn near all its glory – now they are eating their words!

BY: NINTENDO
PRICE: £54.99
RELEASE: SEPTEMBER
GAME TYPE: COMBAT
CART SIZE: 32 MEG

PLAYERS: 1-2
HEAD TO HEAD: YES!
BATTERY BACK-UP: NO
CONTINUES: INFINITE
OPTIONS: CONTROL

DEVELOPMENT: RARE LTD
DISTRIBUTION: NINTENDO
MADE IN: UK
ARTWORK: © RARE '95

Though the game was previewed at the June CES in 1994, it is less than a year since Killer Instinct made its debut as a coin-op. Its purpose, along with Williams' Cruis 'n USA, was originally to showcase forthcoming NU 64 software. Since then Rare have announced Killer 2 is under way for the 64-bit machine; transposing the original to 16-bit instead!

Super NES Killer Instinct proves that Nintendo's 'Now Generation' console is still a richer gaming platform than the expensive 'Next Generation' gear. The game is move-for-move identical to the smash coin-op, apart from the modifications Rare have made to improve the control. So, you could reasonably argue that the home version is better.

This special booklet, provided FREE with issue #36 of NMS, is dedicated to the UK's first review of Super NES Killer Instinct. It's as well to know that our comments are based on knowledge acquired since the popularity of KI took off in the arcades early this year. We spare no absolutely details. This is the most accurate and fair assessment of the biggest game 1995 has to offer the UK. We've seen it; heard it; played it. Now it's time for you to discover the official verdict.

READY!



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It takes more than radical moves to win this tournament. It takes a will, a desire. it takes a Killer Instinct!

JAGO

AGE: 21
HEIGHT: 5'9"
WEIGHT: 190lbs

Jago is a mysterious warrior monk from a remote region of Tibet. Guided by the powerful Tiger Spirit to seek his destiny, he has been led to the Killer Instinct tournament to destroy the evil within.

MASK: Jago's order of Tibetan monks are sworn to silence. They commune with the Tiger Spirit by heart alone.

BELT: Traditional attire, worn to signify status.

SWORD: Ancient. Deadly.

SHOES: Note the razor-sharp blade dividing his toes. This is why Jago's Wind Kicks are so feared!





TECHNIQUE

Edokuken

A projectile technique not unlike Ken and Ryu's fireball. Jago may summon fast, medium, or slow-moving projectiles at will. Use them to lure opponents into range of a Tiger Fury.



Laser Sword

You can almost feel this move tearing through your fighter, as Jago unsheathes his sword to defend himself at close range. This is a great technique to link with a Wind Kick combos.

Tiger Fury

A variation of the Dragon Punch from the Street Fighter II legend. It's Jago's Combo Breaker (see pages 6-7), and the best defence he has against aerial attacks. Like the Dragon Punch, Tiger Fury leaves Jago vulnerable for a split second on landing.

Wind Kick

Behaves more like a charge move than one requiring a joystick motion. A Wind Kick is able to power Jago across the full length of the screen if driven by a Fierce. However it is the Quick Wind Kick that winds up Jago's Ultra.







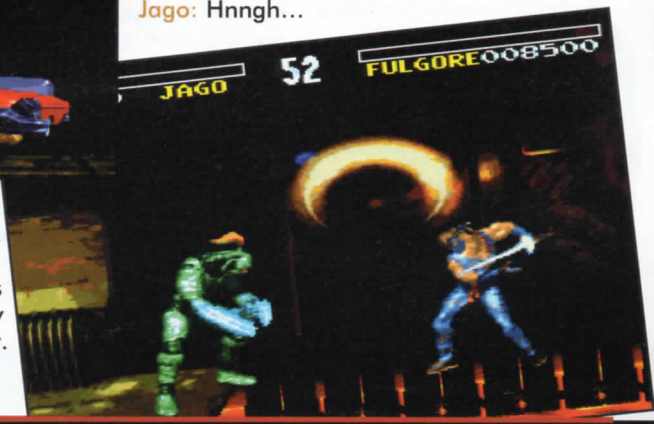


DANGER!

(LEFT) Jago: This game ain't big enough for the two of us! So how about I just squash you down to size a bit?
Jago: Hnngh...



(RIGHT) Jago shows No Mercy, as a defeated Fulgore prepares for his customary disembowelment.



KILLER COMBOS

You can pull a pretty impressive combo from Killer Instinct almost without trying. This is because certain buttons are linked in such a way as to perform 'Auto-Doubles.' The two Quick buttons are associated this way, so are Fierce Low and Medium High; Fierce High and Medium Low. However Auto-Doubles only work if tagged onto a jump-in technique. For example, Jago gets three extra hits by jumping in with a Fierce High and following it up with a Medium Low. Sometimes reversing the trick gets you even better results. To extend your combos, it's necessary to learn the appropriate 'Linker' – a move that bridges the gap from one special routine to another. They take time to perfect, but the rewards are worth the meditation. Finally, on top of all this, each fighter have something known as 'End Specials.' In Jago's case these are listed as his Tiger Fury, Edokuken, and Wind Kick. Tag any one onto the tail end of a valid Auto-Double, then a Linker, then another Auto-Double, and there you have it – a highly respectable piece of personalised combo action.















SPINAL

AGE: 2650
HEIGHT: 5'7"
WEIGHT: 110lbs

SWORD: In Spinal's time, a warrior's sword was christened by their own blood. Knowing how it felt to receive a wound from their own blade improved performance in battle.

Spinal's origin is a closely guarded secret of Ultratech. A secret branch of the corporation, using a variety of special techniques have succeeded in reviving an ancient warrior. With only the vaguest memories of his past life, Spinal knows how to do only one thing – fight!



HEADBAND: Once identified Spinal as the Master Warrior of his people. He was greatly respected.

SHIELD: Spinal's warrior soul abides in here. Without it he would just crumble to dust.

BONES: Bound by a magic aura that allows Spinal to defy the laws of physics with teleportational skills.

TECHNIQUE

Power Devour

At the start of every fight, Spinal is unable to perform projectile attacks of his own. However his shield possesses magical qualities that enable it to absorb those thrown by a competitor. That power is then transferred to Spinal's skeletal body, and displayed as a skull beneath his energy bar.



Skeleport

It's rumoured Spinal can morph into the form of other fighters by working his teleportation skills into a combo. For the time being, this is for us to know and you to find out. Meanwhile, have fun causing his rivals to about-turn so fast their flesh winds up back-to-front!

Searing Skull

Returns one of Spinal's acquired projectiles back to the enemy in the form of a smouldering skull. It's possible to launch two at once if timed correctly! This move also triggers the Bone Wonder's Ultra technique at the end of a combo.



Super Searing Skull.

Uses up more than one skull to perform, but is more likely to stun from a distance than its scalpless brothers. This special is drawn out from Spinal's marrow, using a motion that indicates something big will come of it. What's more, it looks superb!!!





Soul Sword

One to throw open a surprise attack with, or nail to the end of a combo as a final *bon voyage*. It doesn't trip your opponent, so comes in useful as a Linker.

Bone Shaker

Because he is so slight, Spinal can move at an alarming speed. As exemplified by his Bone Shaker; so named because of the bygone warrior's dash and crash strategy.

Sliding Kick

While not being very spectacular, this technique is good for creating some space. Assured to take the legs away from an opponent; It's a tactical move.









COMBO BREAKERS

With such a high hit count to a Killer Instinct combo, it's only fair that there is some way of stopping them. It's hard saying 'fair enough, you got me' in the aftermath of a 12-hit Killer! So Rare introduced a combo clause. Should a fighter execute a specific move while being set upon, they have a chance of getting out alive. 'Combo Breakers' interrupt the sequence a rival is stringing together, but only if the strength of the CB balances that of the combo being performed. For example, a set of moves instigated by the Fierce buttons require a Quick Breaker to counter, and vice versa. So it isn't enough to learn the nuances of just one fighter's moves; they all require revision. Otherwise it's impossible to recognise which buttons are setting off what technique. Apart from the obvious benefit of saving your fighter's skin, there's a hidden advantage too. Post Combo Breaker, the power of certain special moves become enhanced, and a thin white line appears on the energy bar to indicate as much. Previously they were referred to as Shadow Moves, because characters were depicted in the coin-op as trailing a line of trace images. This impressive visual trick has been lost from the home version. Still, the purpose of these post-breaker techniques remains the same. Moves like B Orchid's Firecat, TJ Combo's Knockdown, and Riptor's Jump Rake inflict above twice the damage when post-breaker enhanced! There are even special combos that are only formed using post-breaker specials. So you can see already there's more to Killer Instinct than just amazing presentation.













B.ORCHID

AGE: 23
HEIGHT: 5'7"
WEIGHT: 100lbs

B Orchid is a secret agent, sent by an unknown group to investigate the mysterious disappearances that surround the Killer Instinct tournament. Her true identity and abilities are shrouded in secrecy.

LASER BATON: Controlled telekinetically. Their strength and range are adjustable to suit Orchid's needs.

SUIT: Specially moulded to fit Orchid like a second skin. Stretch material to snap back into place after morphing!

BOOTS: Adrenaline capsules, used to maintain Orchid's phenomenal energy, are secured here.

TECHNIQUE

Lasaken

Lasaken is Japanese for Laser Fist. It is Orchid's projectile attack, the velocity of which is controlled by the three High buttons. A boomerang encased in searing yellow light is launched from Orchid's baton.



Flik Flak

Orchid Cartwheels those sharp stilettos into the face of her opponent! Flik Flak is a charge move that works well within combos, or as a deterrent for anyone considering gloating overhead after a knock-down.





Ichi (Ni-San)

Both Orchid's Laser Batons are presented before her to make a staff. She then dashes toward unsuspecting adversaries in a flash. This is used as an effective combo opener, though it can easily be stopped by an opponent's projectile.

Firecat

Raised lots of oo's and aa's in the coin-op, and is sure to have jaws dropping on the Super NES version too. Observe as this petite Asian lady morphs into a tiger, composed entirely of flame. Deadly as a post-breaker, and used to start an Ultra.

Niguu Giri

Orchid twists into her opponent, arms outstretched, like a rotor blade. With lasers on full beam, this move is powerful enough to lift any adversary – even Riptor – off their feet. It is used to round off combos, or as defence against most aerial attacks.







DANGER!

(LEFT) Orchid prepares to squish this toadified loser with her heel.

(BELOW LEFT) Aieeee! A Bon Jovi tour T-Shirt! Say this ain't so!







HUMILIATION

Victory often instils something of a party mood into a fighter. Often to such a great extent that they turn to the defeated partner and ask them to dance. There's a special way of doing so, however, and it's different for each fighter. Instead of performing a Danger move (see pages ****) fighters activate what is known as a Humiliation instead – forcing their quarry to do the boogaloo. The results are hilarious! Check out Riptor's pitiful Shoop Shoop shambles, or TJ Combo's horrific Hitch Hike. Where did these people learn to dance like this! It's outrageous!







CINDER

AGE: 31
HEIGHT: 5'11"
WEIGHT: 195lbs

EYES: Chemically enhanced eyesight allows Cinder to see objects as if through a heat sensitive camera.

Cinder was a convicted criminal who agreed to participate in Ultratech's chemical weapons test in exchange for early parole. A failed experiment turned him into a being of living flame. He has now been offered freedom if he can defeat Glacius in the Killer Instinct tournament.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Molten. Cinder's body no longer requires organs to function.

SKIN: In a constant state of regeneration. The flames are caused by a metabolism running a million times the speed of normal humans.

TECHNIQUE

Trailblazer

The move where Cinder transforms into a fireball works on the ground and in the air. In both cases the move is performed by tapping toward an opponent twice, then hitting any High attack. On the ground the technique also works like a charge move.





Mirage

The man of flame dims the brightness slightly. Conserving energy allows him to focus his strength better. He is harder to keep track of in this state, but still an obvious target. Strictly for show-offs.

Fireflash

A snappy somersault kick, guaranteed to knock opponents flying. This technique scores multiple hits, and is especially useful as rounding-off move to a great combo. Recipients wince as each smouldering step raises the temperature of their boiling innards.

Inferno

Throws flame at a competitor, though it doesn't torch them in the same way Ryu's Flaming Hadoken in Street Fighter II.







Heatsink

In the coin-op Cinder was partially visible when transparent, thanks to some impressive heat distortion effects. The Super NES isn't capable of this, so when Cinder goes invisible, he's invisible! The only way to see where he is, is by watching the shadow beneath his feet. Not a wise move for a player-controlled Cinder to make – unless, of course, you're a wise ass!

Heat Fist

Stop adversaries in their stride with this flash of molten flesh, extending from Cinder's knuckles. Probably the least used move in his repertoire because of its range.

DANGER!

(TOP) Glacius gets totally melted by Cinder's flame.

(BOTTOM) A pool of molten metal reminds Fulgore of his child-hood.











NO MERCY

At the end of a fight the screen is tinted red for a short time, giving players opportunity to execute a Danger Move. A Danger Move is a secret combination that initiates one of the game's most outrageous routines. Here's where TJ Combo turns his back on you to break someone's neck. This is also the time Orchid chooses to display her, apparently stunning, wares to astonished onlookers. Chief Thunder uses his god-like strength to dismember his victims with one sweep of his axe, leaving the remnants behind. All fighters have at least two Danger Moves, and there are two ways of instigating them. Usually they are completed as an optional extra at the close of a round. However it's also possible to work them into Ultimate Combos, in place of an Ultra. This way a blinding sequence used to finish an opponent automatically rounds off with a Danger Move. Some are better than others – like Spinal's shield spike – but they are all well worth the trouble it takes finding them out.









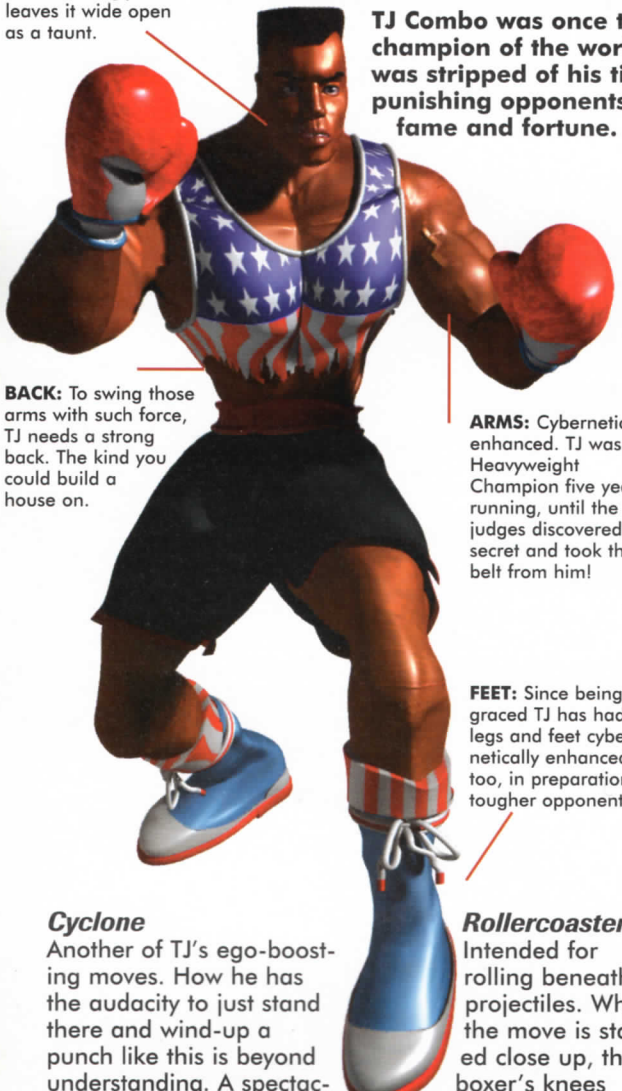




TJ COMBO

AGE: 25
HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 220lbs

TJ Combo was once the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world for five years straight. He was stripped of his title for his brutal methods of punishing opponents. He now fights to regain his fame and fortune.



JAW: Hard as diamond. More likely to break the fist of any ordinary person. In fact TJ willingly leaves it wide open as a taunt.

BACK: To swing those arms with such force, TJ needs a strong back. The kind you could build a house on.

ARMS: Cybernetically enhanced. TJ was Heavyweight Champion five years running, until the judges discovered his secret and took the belt from him!

FEET: Since being disgraced TJ has had his legs and feet cybernetically enhanced too, in preparation for tougher opponents.

TECHNIQUE

Powerline

Best wait until someone is dizzy before trying this one – as it's made extremely obvious what TJ is going to do. It hurts good, but taking a run up isn't the most subtle of tactics!





Cyclone

Another of TJ's ego-boosting moves. How he has the audacity to just stand there and wind-up a punch like this is beyond understanding. A spectacular crowd pleaser though.

Rollercoaster

Intended for rolling beneath projectiles. When the move is started close up, the boxer's knees score an extra hit.

Flying Knee/ KO

The same method is used to drive three variations of TJ's knee technique, one for each High button. All of which are charged, and all able to stagger from a surprising distance.







Spinfist
A sneaky back-hander thrown in as a Linker to extend combos. This also irritates the life out of someone trying to sneak in close.





DANGER!
(ABOVE) The Chiropractor!
(RIGHT) Spinal is smashed into the screen!

KILLER COMPARISONS

One of the most asked questions about KI has been about the scaling and rotating backgrounds. Do they exist in the Super NES version? No – is the short answer. However a number of special effects have adapted quite well to the 16-bit hardware. For example it's still possible to knock fighters from roof-tops, then watch them fall to their doom below. Without revealing too much, this is how Eyedol is finally defeated. One aspect of the game we admit to feeling very apprehensive about was the speech – and the possible lack of it. Well, it's our pleasure to tell you that every significant speech sample from the original coin-op has not been lost in the translation. Phrases like 'READY!,' 'FIGHT ON!,' 'DANGER!'; all the characters' names, and combo announcements are in there. They're crystal clear and have retained their chilling cyber quality. Which brings us onto the subject of the music – which is magnificent! Chief Thunder's theme is layered with crunchy guitar, pounding drums, and tribal chanting. And the quality of the flute, used to build up the tension in Riptor's level, is unbelievable. KI forces you to take a step back, look at what you once thought was possible with the Super NES, then allow yourself to be astonished by Rare's ground-breaking accomplishments.









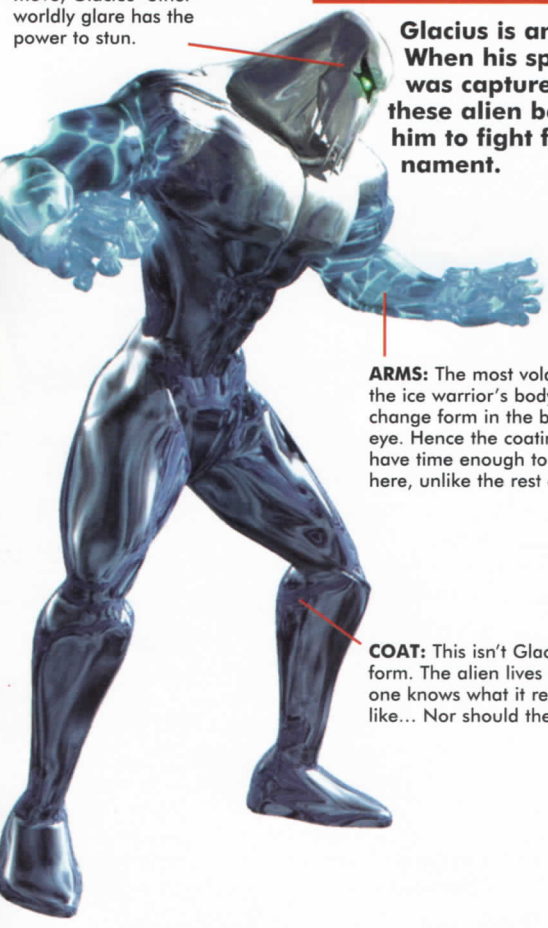




GLACIUS

AGE: UNKNOWN
HEIGHT: 6'0"
WEIGHT: 300lbs

EYES: Ever looked into the eyes of an alien? It's not a pleasant experience. Before he even makes a move, Glacius' other-worldly glare has the power to stun.



Glacius is an alien being from a distant planet. When his spaceship crash landed on earth he was captured by Ultratech. Hoping to prove these alien beings to be inferior. Ultratech forces him to fight for his life in the Killer Instinct tournament.

ARMS: The most volatile areas of the ice warrior's body - able to change form in the blink of an eye. Hence the coating doesn't have time enough to crystalise here, unlike the rest of him.

COAT: This isn't Glacius' natural form. The alien lives inside. No one knows what it really looks like... Nor should they wish to.

TECHNIQUE

Liquidize

A fireball manoeuvre followed by any Low attack button causes Glacius to sink into the floor. He either arises with an almighty uppercut, or reappears far enough away to launch another attack. This move features heavily in Glacius' Ultra.





Cold Shoulder

Keep this move charged throughout a combo exceeding five hits, then release it for an Ultra! A good surprise-opener too.



Ice Lance

Another technique that seems fairly unproductive on its own, but looks especially brutal when worked into a combo.



Shockwave

Glacius frees some of his energy, and allows it to bounce ominously toward his foe. Is especially potent when used close up.

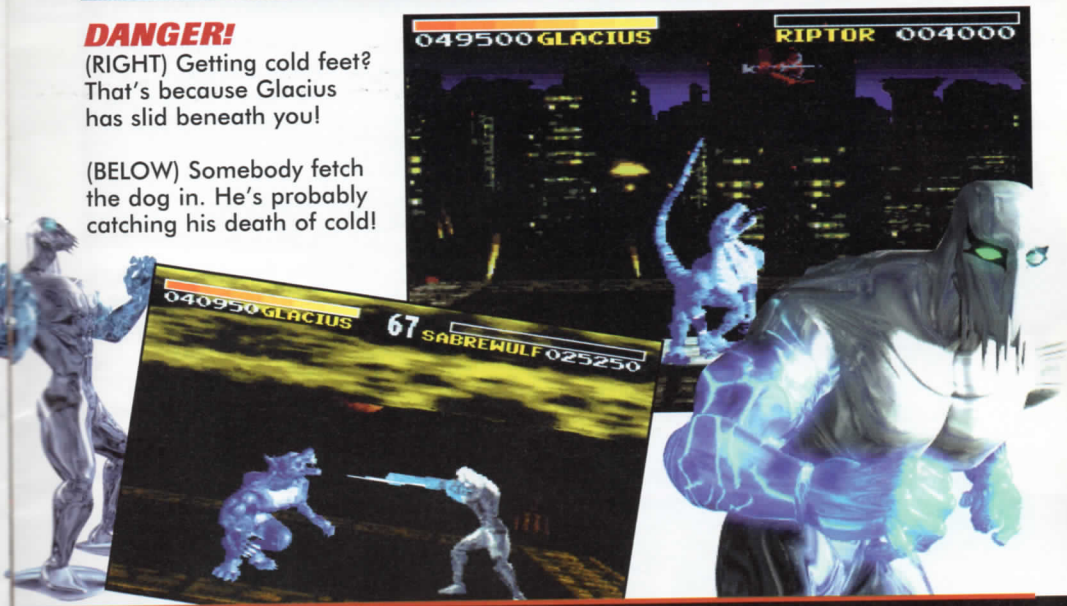




DANGER!

(RIGHT) Getting cold feet? That's because Glacius has slid beneath you!

(BELOW) Somebody fetch the dog in. He's probably catching his death of cold!



SPARRING PARTNERS

Most times the only practice opportunity in a combat game is a modified two-player mode – with infinite time, reduced damage etc. Failing that it's the tried and tested, 'Just stand there a minute' approach. For the benefit of this year's contestants, Ultratech have laid on a Cybernetic Soldier (version 1.4) as a punch bag of sorts. It takes no damage, does not fight back, and contestants are free to spar with it until their heart's content. It is the Ultratech philosophy that an excellent fighter requires as much practice as a complete beginner. Technique should be flawless, as bouts move so fast there is absolutely no time for mistakes.

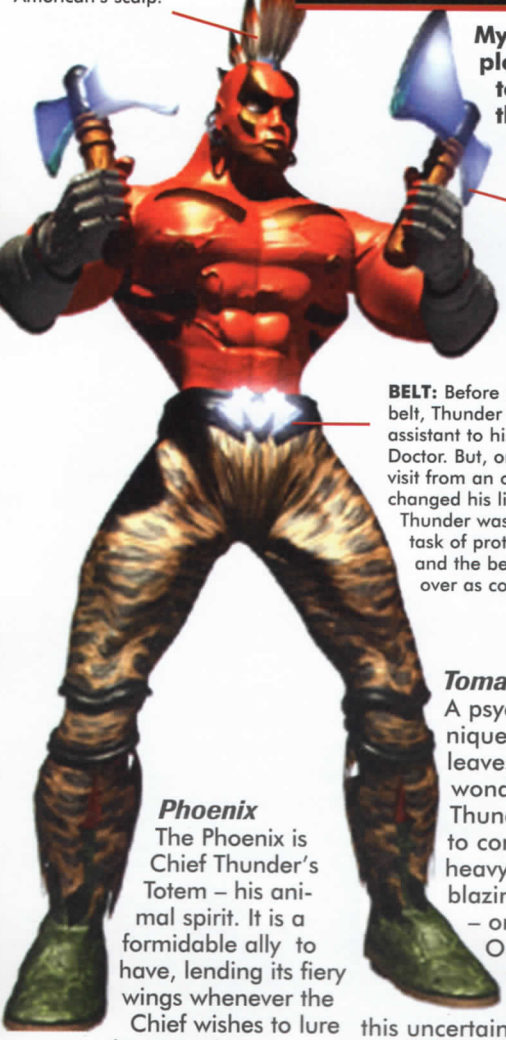


CHIEF THUNDER

AGE: 42
HEIGHT: 6'5"
WEIGHT: 280lbs

MOHAWK: Associates Chief with the infamous Mohican tribe, though the peaks are not made of hair. Around ten blades of tempered steel are crudely stapled to the Native American's scalp.

Mystical defender of Native American people, Chief Thunder enters the Killer Instinct tournament to solve the mystery behind the disappearance of his brother, Eagle, in the previous year's tournament.



AXES: Came as part of the protection deal!

BELT: Before receiving this belt, Thunder was a lowly assistant to his tribe's Witch Doctor. But, one fateful night, a visit from an old Indian spirit changed his life forever. Thunder was blessed with the task of protecting his people, and the belt was handed over as confirmation.

TECHNIQUE

Sammamish

For all its flash, this technique is likely to leave the Chief crest-fallen should it miss. The Mohawk's razor-sharp peaks cut deep, but to do so the move requires Thunder to propel himself high into the air. Reserve for end specials only.





Tomahawk

A psyching technique, which leaves opponents wondering if Thunder is going to come down heavy with his blazing axe attack – or not. Occasionally the chief plays on this uncertainty to test a warrior's nerve.

Phoenix

The Phoenix is Chief Thunder's Totem – his animal spirit. It is a formidable ally to have, lending its fiery wings whenever the Chief wishes to lure his prey closer.

Triplax

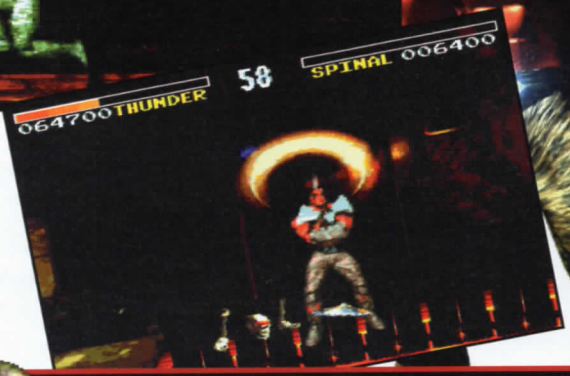
'Keep that combo rolling with a Triplax – the move you can charge by holding away, or towards. As Chief Thunder knows all too well, A Triplax A Day Keeps The Witch Doctor Away. So he's sure to include one free with every combo.' Thunder's 'bread and butter' move.













DANGER!
(ABOVE) Thunder – and lightning.

(RIGHT) Spinal's remains litter the floor. It is finished.



EYEDOL

With Eyedol lies the background to the entire game. He is reputedly a post-apocalyptic Warlord, summoned by an army of future warriors desperate to protect their homeland. Of course they soon lived to regret it! So too did the army across the water who had tried a similar trick. Mercifully Eyedol's bad self was hauled off to Limbo, along with the opposition's diabolical side-kick, by some unseen force protecting our world.

Being the conniving son-of-a-celestial glitch he is, however, Eyedol appears to have found a way out. It's years later, and the world has undergone many changes since he was last here, but he's just in time to join the Ultratech contest. And there were Jago, Orchid, TJ, and the rest thinking they had a hope! Ptcha!

Back in the real world, we can exclusively reveal that Eyedol is playable, as a secret character, in Super NES Killer Instinct. Rare have admitted to as much, but refused point-blank to reveal the cheat. All they would concede is that a player with enough skill wouldn't take long to solve the Eyedol enigma...







RIPTOR

AGE: 4
HEIGHT: 7'0"
WEIGHT: 700lbs

Riptor is a product of Ultratech's DNA Manipulation Project. By splicing human an reptilian genes, they have created a fighting creature with animal ferocity and human intelligence.

TAIL: A popular exercise in Riptor's nursery was 'Catch.' Huge carcasses – weighing in at around 200lbs – were tossed into his enclosure, that were promptly batted about by the mutant's tail. Don't worry, they said, he's only playing!



GIZZARD: At the back of Riptor's throat there are HUGE venom glands. The give-away is that hump just above his shoulders.

GAUNTLETS: Ultratech doesn't believe in chaining their livestock to walls, not least their prize fighter. These amulets, while giving Riptor freedom to move around, provide an electric shock should he step out of line.

CLAWS: Titanium coated. Nuff said!

TECHNIQUE

Dragon Breath

Unusually for any wild animal, Riptor prefers his food cooked. Luckily he has his own substitute for a gas burner lodged right there in the back of his throat. Move him in close to make even more of a meal of his supper.



Rampage

Upon spying Riptor in the same breathing space, and assuming he hasn't seen you yet, two options become available. Either you try to sneak by, in the hope that he doesn't hear, or turn tail and run for your life. In any case Riptor's Rampage move is quick enough to pluck you off your feet in the process!



Flaming Venom

"Flaming Venom + Jump Rake = Dinner." (Extract taken from Riptor's Diary notes.) Usually performed from a standing position – this aerial attack is secret.



Jump Rake

Riptor usually finds his quarry tries to jump out of his reach. Those claws of his enable him to jump right after them, and bring them down – SCREAMING!!!





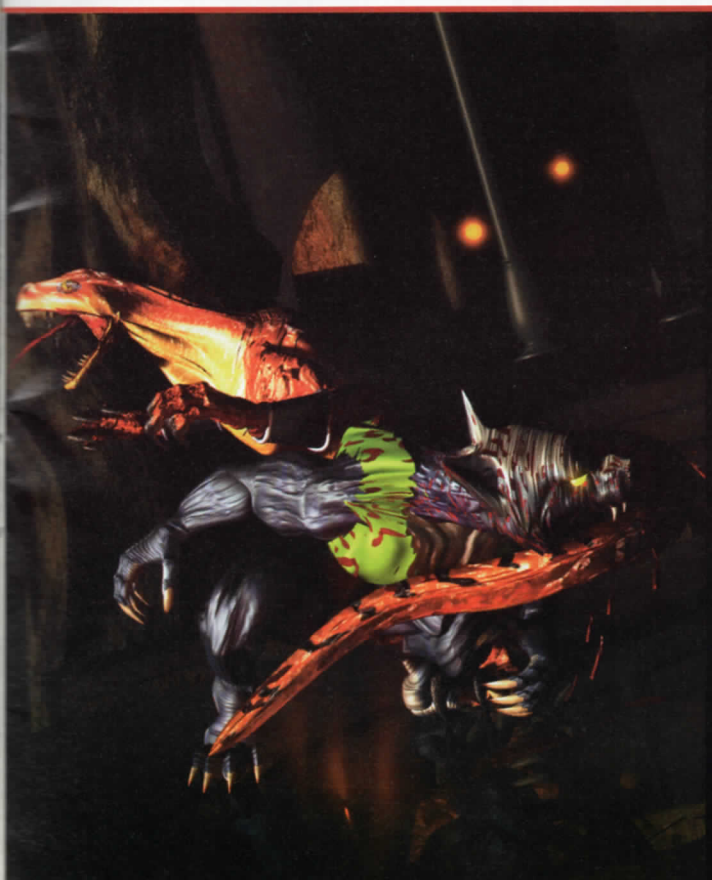
Tailflip
Billed as a perfect End Special, yet we find this is a magnificent opener too! Sandwich a Fierce High attack between the two and you've got yourself an easy-to-perform Master combo!











COMMENT

I first bought a Super Famicom to play Capcom's superb coin-op conversions. None of them were perfect – mostly because they tended to slow down a lot. As did Irem's Super R-type – another of my favourites back then. Since then I've been pretty much starved of the 'arcade experience' at home, and have almost forgotten what it's like to marvel at a £60 piece of software performing what a board costing thousands of pounds was designed to achieve. Almost. Because for the first time, Nintendo have delivered something that looks and plays so close to an original machine that it's staggering. I'm not going to be foolish enough to say it's a carbon copy. It isn't. The sprites are noticeably smaller and the special effects lack their original lustre. But this is essentially the exact same code that has been keeping arcade pundits hard at work for just over eight months now. There's no slow-down, no glitches, and no compromising the Super NES hardware. This is a must-have game, in no uncertain terms!

FULGORE

AGE: 1
HEIGHT: 6'2"
WEIGHT: 560lbs

PLUME: Should he ever lose this in battle Fulgore loses all sense of balance. Not just a piece of fancy decoration, it is a vital component of his finely-tuned make-up.

RAZORS: His hands are mere decoration (Ultratech wanted that Human touch!) The wares in question are adaptations of ancient Barbarian Gladiatorial equipment. Instead of being fashioned from steel, they're made from Ultratech's new plasma alloy.



LIGHTS: Colour varies, depending on his mood. Green indicates that he's feeling content. Blue shows concentration. Anger equals Red – his favourite shade.

PANEL: Fulgore doesn't take damage; he's just programmed to register it. These panels are installed to make a record of each blow to his unprotected body, for review later in research labs. It's no good conceptualising a soldier who doesn't know how to defend.

A prototype cybernetic soldier developed by Ultratech, Fulgore was entered into the Killer Instinct tournament as a final test of his combat capabilities. Once its abilities are proven, mass production will begin.

TECHNIQUE

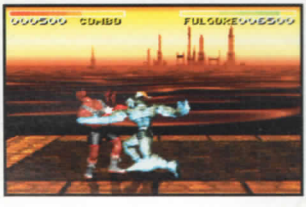
Plasmaslice

Wrist-mounted razors score the abdomen of anyone foolish enough to jump Fulgore. It's another Dragon Punch variation, but many times more impressive. If only for the sheer power it exudes.



Cyberdash

Like when thunder follows lightning, the sound of Fulgore's feet pounding the floor seem to reach you seconds after his actual assault. Especially where, bathed in electricity, the cyborg pounces from the far end of the arena.



Laser Storm

Fighters are warned not to leap around too much when battling Fulgore. His Laser Storm comes in three strengths; the lighter ones being rapid fire, and able to juggle opponents. Stand firm, and try to find an alternative way through.



Eyelaser

When fighting close range, Eyelaser stuns briefly. Enough time for Fulgore to initiate the combo he was made for.



Reflect

Fulgore has a way of making contestants eat their own projectiles. Reflect does exactly what the name implies – thanks to a shield of light.





DANGER!

(TOP) You will go to the shop and by me sweets...

(MIDDLE) Vudda-vudda!!!

Plasmaport

First time you see this, you wonder what horror is going to be inflicted next. Actually it's nothing more than a teleportation move, designed to disorientate rather than dismember.











COMMENT

So where do I begin in telling you how utterly smart Killer Instinct is? Let's start with the graphics. Much has been made of Rare's use of ACM in creating their sprites, a lot has also been said how similar this to the arcade version. That's pretty much true and the graphics do bear an uncanny resemblance to their coin-op counterparts. They're smooth, speedy, incredibly well animated and the neat little touches like shadows and reflections all add to the illusion, although you can see where they've had to cut corners - the sprite scaling's had to go, alas. Next, sound. This is a real surprise - the game is brimming with it, including all the speech announcing the combos, more samples than you could wish for and some quite brilliant music that is almost CD-quality in nature. Lastly we have the actual gameplay. This is where the game truly exceeds. It is immediately easy to pick up, containing familiar elements from other beat 'em ups, yet familiarity unveils the game's many nuances and you'll soon be pulling off murderous combos and merciless finishing moves. Once you've got your head around all these possibilities, the game gets better still, for each combo has a combo breaker, so the fights become battles of nerve and wit, not just joypad skills. I might also add that the pace in the game will leave you breathless. Once truly mastered, Killer Instinct has no peers on the Super NES. Sell your parents to ensure you own this game.

SABREWULF

AGE: 45
HEIGHT: 5'9"
WEIGHT: 400lbs

Sabrewulf is afflicted with the rare disease, Lycanthropy. Although he has spent most of his life as a recluse, he enters the Killer Instinct tournament on the promise if a cure if he is victorious.

HUMAN SOUL: Sabre's sad, pleading, blood-shot eyes are all that is left to remind us that this... creature was once a human being.



LYCANTHROPY: Unfortunately Sabrewulf's frightening looks owe nothing to the findings of Ultratech technology, or the blessings of ancient gods. His countenance is the result of a curse that transforms people into Werewolves. Looking on the bright side, at least there's nobody in the Ultratech tournament armed with silver bullets. Now that would have been a tragedy.

TECHNIQUE

Sabrespin

Like Chief Thunder's Triplax, this technique is practiced by charging either towards or away before execution. Knife-like talons whistle as they cut through the air before criss-cossing an unfortunate's torso.



Flaming Bat

Ultimate-ly Sabrewulf fights better at close quarters. So the Flaming Bat provides the cover he needs to move in, without fear of being stopped half-way. Helps realise the full potential of Sabreslap.



Sabreslap

Before uppercutting his opponent, Sabre takes a run up if distanced from his opponent. He can't stop himself either, so is vulnerable to a kick in the muzzle – or worse! Only use this when close up, or if the other fighter is dizzy.



Sabrepounce

Definitely an improvement over Sabreslap. From out of nowhere Sabrewulf is able to travel the length of the arena, in one bound! The greatest way for Sabrewulf to open a combo with a big hit. Better if Auto-doubled.





Howl

At first we thought this was just a taunt – then we noticed how the opponent's energy bar looked before and after Sabre's choral demonstration. Howling actually increases his strength – if only he had the time to use it!

Sabreroll

As the name suggests, Sabrewulf tumbles toward slow-witted rivals, ready to dig his claws in when he arises. Has a similar effect to Sabreslap. It's how he gets there that makes all the difference. Don't you agree Cinder?









GRAPHICS

That this is the Super NES displaying such tantalizingly detailed, beautifully rendered characters is mind-boggling. Out of around 1000 frames of animation per fighter, Rare claim to have lost only 20%. The only features that are missing are the scaling and rotational effects – which were superfluous in the first place. Each fighter in Killer Instinct has charisma. You can feel Glacius' stare; imagine the power of Fulgore! The Humiliations and Danger Moves add variety and cool humour .

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SOUND

It's easy to let this aspect of the game pass without paying too much attention – the action is so intense. But take time out to appreciate the spaciousness and clarity of each location's theme, and you'll be amazed! These are full-voiced pieces of music, including speech sampling and percussion to great effect. The distinctive 'voice' of the coin-op hasn't been sacrificed either.

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PLAYABILITY

Rare have received numerous 'constructive criticisms' about Killer Instinct. This is something they invited upon themselves in order to make the home version as playable as possible. That it happens to have surfaced on the Super NES hasn't changed the rules any. A new version of the arcade board was circulating almost every month until recently. This is the latest, greatest, and FINAL version of Killer Instinct: Part One. It plays better than the coin-op. That was the idea all along.

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LASTABILITY

Even Jago, the fighter with the easiest moves, takes a while to master. Others with quirkier strategies require even more thinking time dedicated to them. The hardest difficulty setting proves extremely tough, especially when trying to reach the end without using a continue. And, of course, tournaments organised between two or more people are guaranteed to run and run.

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OVERALL

We're the official magazine, so we're bound to say this is the best, right? Wrong! Killer Instinct is unlikely to attain the kind of status Street Fighter II has deserved, or compete with the modifications SNK build into their Fatal Fury boards with alarming regularity. But KI boasts a unique, cock-sure kind of attitude, that makes it stand out from the crowd. And the Ultra Combo is among the most memorable features a coin-op ever produced. It has speed, strategy and extremely good looks.

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LONG-TERM INTEREST

HOUR 4
DAY 4
WEEK 4
MONTH 4
YEAR 3

BREAKDOWN

STRATEGY 3
ACTION 4
CHALLENGE 3
REFLEXES 4
ORIGINALITY 2



This EXCLUSIVE Killer Instinct review book is presented FREE with Nintendo Magazine System
© EMAP Images Ltd. © Nintendo Co. Ltd. © Rare Ltd.
Designed by Pete 'Oh, I just done an Ultra' Barrell
Written and Auto-Doubled by Paul 'Just let me try that again' Davies
End Special courtesy of Andy 'It's the joypad' McVittie